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## Editorial Opinion

# The Cyanide Test

There is no doubt that many Naperville residents are deeply troubled by the planned test-incineration of film chips containing trace amounts of cyanide.

Their concern is genuine, and has been great enough to push them out onto the street with placards — along with their children — to oppose what they believe is a life-threatening experiment.

As The SUN stated in an editorial two weeks ago, in our opinion the proposed incineration is safe, and does not pose a hazard to residents.

That opinion was based upon two hearings before the City Council. At those hearings, officials from the C-E Raymond Co., the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Illinois Attorney General's Office endorsed the test, described the safeguards which would be built into it, to prevent it from posing a hazard to anybody.

Residents who live in nearby homes, and others who live elsewhere in Naperville — some of whom are part of the scientific community — strongly opposed the test as an unacceptable risk in a residential area.

Who is right? Who is to be believed?

It must be recognized that the U.S. and Illinois Environmental Protection Agencies have a vested interest in seeing the test conducted.

The USEPA and the IEPA are charged with the duty of protecting the environment and the public. In instances where the environment has been abused and the public endangered, such as at Times-Beach or Love Canal, it has been because someone has violated USEPA regulations.

In this instance, the agencies want to see the test conducted, to prove that incineration is a safe way to dispose of this type of hazardous waste. This small-scale test will clear the way for incineration — *at a commercial-sized facility not located in Naperville* — of 14,500,000 pounds of film chips parked around the Chicago area. Those chips, stored in trailers, do pose a danger to the public.

The residents opposed to the test also have a vested interest, in protecting themselves and their families. Any addi-

tional risk — particularly to people who are frightened for their children — seems unacceptable. For a person who lives close to the C-E Raymond plant, it becomes very difficult to put the proposed test in perspective.

The City Council, faced with the need to rationally evaluate the issue, called upon scientists from local research facilities — who appear to have no vested interest in the question, and who have some appropriate expertise — for their opinion. Two panels, of somewhat differing composition, concluded that the test is not hazardous and should proceed.

County Board member Mary Price, a Longwood area resident who has opposed the test, asked the County Health Department for an opinion. That opinion was that the test does not pose a hazard to residents.

From our point of view, the Council's 3-2 vote in favor of the test was reasonable.

In the days since that vote, The SUN has published a number of letters opposing the test, some based on emotional pleas, some raising technical objections. Those technical objections deserve a reply from the USEPA or C-E Raymond, although many of them were addressed at the public hearings. In the next week, The SUN will seek explicit answers to those questions.

A final point to be made is that misinformation about the nature of the test was widely disseminated in some early television newscasts. Those reports indicated that all of the tainted film-chips were to be burned at the C-E Raymond plant. We do not know whether to attribute this to sloppy reporting, or ignorance or misrepresentation on the part of those supplying information to the reporters. In any event, the public was poorly served.

This controversy proves that Naperville is not immune to political demagoguery. A fringe candidate for Congress, by becoming the organizer of the cyanide protest, has succeeded in having his face and name televised into homes all over the Chicago area. But by spouting rubbish about pollution in Lisle, Woodridge and Downers Grove (which happen to be part of the 13th Congressional District), he has convinced us his goal is political, not environmental.

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## —Letters to the Editor—

### *Bombard the City Council with protests*

Mayor Price and Council Members Newkirk and Wehrli have made a grave mistake voicing approval to the C-E Raymond Co. to conduct a cyanide film chips burn. What was the hurry in giving an assent to burn? Why wasn't a sample poll made of the residents to determine their wishes? It could have been made in several ways, e.g. ballot in The SUN, telephone survey etc. It is amazing how dictatorial some individuals become when elected to an office of power.

Rasmussen and Phelan are to be congratulated for their clear thinking on such a sensitive matter that could easily develop into a serious health hazard.

Napervillians "Awake before it's too late." If we thought the former mayor's work performance required a change, think and honestly evaluate this trio totally lacking in the interest and health of the residents.

In retrospect, for myself and the residents who championed the mayor's election should certainly consider voting out Mrs. Price and her irresponsible cohorts in the next election.

Granted waste matter is a problem and it should be disposed of in an efficient and safe manner. Let the cyanide chips be taken to a remote and unpopulated area to be burned.

Cyanide ash floating over the air of Naperville be inhaled by its residents is frightening. We worry about nuclear war; this is a hazard right here in our own community. Let's get on the band wagon and bombard the Council with our protests. Remember they are accountable to the people who voted them into office.

To think, C-E Raymond has said if the Council had voiced its disapproval at the outset they would not proceed with the burn. What a pity, this emotionally charged issue could have been avoided.

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## Cyanide test a low-tech 'garbage burn'

My family and I are residents of Longwood Manor Subdivision. I am an electronics engineer presently working at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory. I am a past employee of Argonne National Laboratory. At both laboratories I was, and still am, involved in the design and operation of real-time computer control and data acquisition systems used to gather and analyze experimental data.

I object to the C-E Raymond Co. tests on both plant location and technical grounds.

Whether or not the planned test is safely carried out this time is irrelevant when the failure of any toxic waste test at that site could contaminate the surrounding densely populated area located no more than a block away. The current cyanide burn test simply sets a dangerous precedent for the people in the area. The standard cliches and public relations hype about the dangers of gasoline tanks etc. just do not cut it here, nor does the industrial safe level of cyanide mean very much when you are speaking about the safety of children in the area.

Am I to believe that if any company within a few blocks of a grade school were to contaminate the air with the "industrial safe" level of any toxic waste The SUN would support its operation? I think not, at least not if the paper were interested in the moral judgment of its readers and/or its economic survival.

My technical objection involves the technical aspects of this so called "scientific experiment" at the C-E Raymond "laboratory." I toured the C-E Raymond facility and found a high-bay area with some old equipment installed which could hardly be called high technology by the greatest stretch of the imagination. Not only is the equipment relatively old but there are no gas monitoring sensors installed on the incinerator. Safety equipment for factory personnel such as Scott air packs and fire blankets were either well hidden or non-existent.

Who has tested the C-E Raymond Co. equipment for proper operation? To what accuracy is the temperature in the incinerator measured and at how many locations in the furnace? Obviously the temperature is critical to the destruction of cyanide. If the furnace does not reach the proper temperature the cyanide will not be destroyed and the danger of release with other burn products will be increased. How is the vacuum measured in the device? Who is responsible for the calibration of the sensing equipment on the furnace? What kind of automatic alarms are installed in the C-E Raymond high-bay area to warn of dangerous test conditions? In other words what will be monitored, when will it be monitored, how will it be monitored, and by who or what will it be monitored?

I was told by C-E Raymond that TRW is under

contract to provide monitoring. Unfortunately, even that information is wrong according to the permits issued.

In any case the test specification document for this burn should answer some of the questions raised above. I have tried to obtain that document from both the Naperville mayor's office and the Illinois EPA to no avail. Why is this document so hard to obtain? This means to me that the Naperville City Council and the city advisers pronounced this test safe without reading that document. This is truly unbelievable and ridiculous.

The safety of this test is directly related to the equipment used in the burn and the way in which all variables will be measured, monitored and recorded. Will a computer system be used to measure temperatures, pressures, gases and control the feed to the furnace so that there is automatic control of the test and any emergency situation that develops? If not, this test is simply a sloppy set-up highly dependent upon people in various locations both inside and outside of the plant trying to communicate with each other both rapidly and accurately. I think we all know how well this would work. This type of operation is simply not a scientific experiment but a garbage burn with a few people standing around playing scientist and hoping that all goes well.

Assuming that this particular test is successful I imagine that councilman Wherli is his zealous helpful way will pick out one or many of the other 2800 kinds of waste shown on page three of the C-E Raymond bulletin 815 (attached) which I obtained during my tour of the Raymond facility, to test burn at the Naperville plant. Let's see now, should it be pharmaceuticals, pesticides, fumicides, rocket propellant, radioactive waste or how about insecticides, defolants (Vietnam agent

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## EPA may be misinforming residents

How can Mayor Price be so sure that we are the ones which are misinformed?

Remember, we also have testimony from experts who have pointed out that there are risks involved with the cyanide chip test burning.

Why would Dr. Joseph or Dr. Klee, who live in Naperville, misinform us? What have they to gain

through misinforming us? The EPA does have something to gain, and their experts don't live here.

We hope that those concerned about the cyanide chip burning in Naperville will join us in front of the Naperville City Hall on Saturday at 10 a.m.

Paul Neuman  
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orange), or maybe biological waste the armed services need to dispose of. Come on SUN, take a stand with Price, Newkirk, and Wehrli. Let's test burn all of these right here in good old Naperville.

I suggest that if the U.S. EPA and the Illinois EPA is so interested in the data from this test then there will be more requests for tests by the USEPA for other types of wastes. The U.S. EPA should commission a Toxic Waste Laboratory (TWL) at a National laboratory located on Federal land in an unpopulated area. Individual state EPAs could contribute to the operation of such a labora-

tory where test such as this cyanide burn could be correctly carried out without danger to people. U.S. National laboratories already have federally funded programs in place dealing with toxic wastes. A TWL could be an extension of one of those programs.

It is obvious that The SUN and some members of the City Council have only learned how to spell the words "high technology." The people of Longwood Manor and Country Lakes are unfortunately living through The SUN's "pollution" on the subject and the City Council's misunderstanding of the words "high technology." The C-E Raymond Company's present cyanide burn test as well as

those tests which may be planned for the future at the plant, are low-tech potentially dangerous operations that do not belong in an area close to schools and residential areas. Naperville should have carefully reviewed the C-E Raymond Company's goals before recruiting the firm to the Naperville area in the first place. As a parting thought who is to say that they will not test toxic waste at that location whether or not they have permits to do so?

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